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LETTER DATED 12 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to forward to you the attached statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea today, 12 March 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-06903 (E) 150399

Annex

Statement by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, issued at Asmara on 12 March 1999

Ethiopia's aggression on Eritrea in Violation of International Law and UNSC Resolutions

Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, has informed the Ambassadors accredited to his country on Monday, 8 March, that his government will launch another offensive against Eritrea "before the weekend". Ethiopia's declared decision to continue its war of aggression against Eritrea and to resort to large-scale military action:

1. is in contravention of the OAU Framework for a peaceful solution of the dispute which underlines that the war must come to an end as soon as it is accepted by both parties. Ethiopia has therefore no cause to resort to force as the Framework Agreement has been accepted by both parties;

2. is in violation and blatant contempt of UN Security Council Resolution 1117, 1226 and 1227 and, in particular, the Statement of 4 March that called for "an immediate end to hostilities" while expressing "regret at Ethiopia's continuation of its military action";

3. poses a grave threat to regional peace and stability as this was indeed underlined in the Security Council Statement of 4 March.

Moreover, Ethiopia has wantonly and callously violated Eritrean sovereignty and international law and covenants to which it is a signatory by:

- invading Eritrean territory in July 1997 and forcibly bringing the Eritrean Bada region under its administration;

- issuing unilaterally an illegal map in October 1997 redrawing Eritrea's international boundaries which is an act of aggression;

- attacking Eritrean units in the Badme area on 6 May 1998 and starting all out attacks against Eritrea throughout the common border including air attacks on the capital, Asmara;

- breaking the moratorium on air strikes that the United Nations has called on both sides to respect;

- targeting civilians and economic installations in its air raids;

- employing over 200 mercenaries in direct fighting against Eritrea; and,

- cruelly deporting en masse and without due process of law over 53,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin while illegally detaining over 1,500 in Blatten and others in other concentration camps.

Ethiopia thus bears full responsibility for the war and its consequences. In light of Ethiopia's violations of international law and of UN Security Council Resolutions and its open contempt for them, and the danger that its avowed escalation poses to regional peace and stability, the Government of Eritrea calls on the UNSC to act without delay before it is too late. In this regard, the Government of Eritrea calls on the UNSC to:

- condemn Ethiopia for its war of aggression against Eritrea in flagrant violation of the UN Charter and UNSC Resolutions; and,

- take, on the basis of the UN Charter, urgent and forceful measures against Ethiopia.